The decrease in the net profit by 33.28% is mainly on account of withdrawal of Access Deficit Charges (ADC) by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) which was earlier available to MTNL on incoming calls. The adverse impact of ADC on profit is Rs. 70 crores approximately In addition, w.e.f. 02.10.2004, there was major downward revision in STD rates for calls to more than 200 Kms from Rs. 4.80 per minute to Rs. 2.40 per minute.

(c) MTNL has taken following steps to improve the net profit of the company:

* Fast expansion and provisioning of GSM and broadband connections.
* Introduction of attractive schemes to retain and expand landline subscriber base.
* Transparent and flexible tariff plans.
* Rationalization of expenditure to reduce administrative and operating cost.
* Modernization and optimizing of telecommunication network.
* Reducing staff strength by way of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and right sizing.
* Introduction of value added services.
* Increase the footprints abroad.

Backlog vacancies

*499. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2004 in his Ministry and various Departments under the Ministry;

(b) whether a special drive was carried out to fill in the above backlog vacancies;

(c) if so, the number of vacancies filled in during the last two years, Department wise; and

(d) what are the backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2006?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): (a) to (d) There was no backlog vacancy reserved for SCs/STs as on 1.7.2004 in any of three Departments of Ministry of Personnel, PG and Pensions. However, 60 backlog vacancies reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were identified as on 1.7.2004 in the constitutional/ statutory organizations under the Ministry namely, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) (09), Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) (02), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) (05) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) (44) for being filled up through a Special Recruitment Drive. 27 backlog vacancies have since been filled up and the remaining vacancies in the UPSC (04), CAT (02), CBI (24) and CVC (03) are in the process of being filled up.

Indian workers in Afghanistan

*500. SHRI DARA SINGH:
SHRI LALIT SURI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in November, 2005 M. Kutty, a driver working with BRO, was abducted by the Taliban and three days later his body was found in Kandhar and now the murder of Suryanarayana, a Telecom engineer, posted in Afghanistan has raised question about Government's decision to expose around 2,000 Indians working in Afghanistan to potential terrorist attack at the hands of Taliban;

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken so far to save the lives and properties of Indians who are at present working/living in Afghanistan; and

(c) the nature of security provided by Government of Afghanistan for their protection and safety?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) In November 2005, Shri Maniappan Raman Kutty, a driver working with Border Roads Organisation (BRO) was abducted and killed by Taliban. Shri K. Suryanarayana, an Indian Telecom Engineer was killed by the Taliban on 29 April 2006. The Government of India's decision to help the Government and people of